

GUNSLINGIN' GALOOTS!

APRIL
No. 4

WESTERN CRIME-BUSTERS

10¢



featuring:
Fighting BOB DALE
K-BAR-KATE
SIX-GUN SMITH
WILMA WEST

BULLET-PACKED WESTERN ADVENTURES!



WEB COMIC
UNIVERSE.COM

FIGHTING BOB DALE

in "BULLETS FOR BALLOTS"

THE SHERIFF OF CANYON COUNTY IS ALWAYS ON THE MOVE IN HIS DOMAIN - SEEING THAT "LAW AND ORDER" IS OBSERVED. ONE DAY, HE RIDES INTO THE TOWN OF **ROCKY BEND**, WHERE AN ELECTION WILL SOON BE HELD FOR THE OFFICE OF MAYOR...

I'VE HEARD ABOUT THIS YOUNG FELLOW DANIELS - SEEMS TO BE AN HONEST YOUNG LAWYER, BUT HE'LL HAVE TOUGH GOING IN THIS TOWN. MITCH TABOR AND HIS GANG HAVE HAD CONTROL HERE FOR A LONG TIME.

VOTE FOR
WALT DANIELS
FOR
MAYOR



AT THAT SAME TIME, IN ANOTHER PART OF THE TOWN, MITCH TABOR AND SOME OF HIS HENCHMEN ARE BUSY TEARING DOWN WALT DANIELS' ELECTION POSTERS...

TEAR THEM ALL DOWN, BOYS. WE BETTER LET FOLKS KNOW RIGHT NOW THAT WE AIN'T GOIN' TUH HAVE THAT REFORMIN' GALOOT FER MAYOR.

WE'LL STICK WITH YUH, MITCH. THIS HERE IS OUR TOWN AND WE AIM TUH KEEP ON RUNNING IT AS WE LIKE!



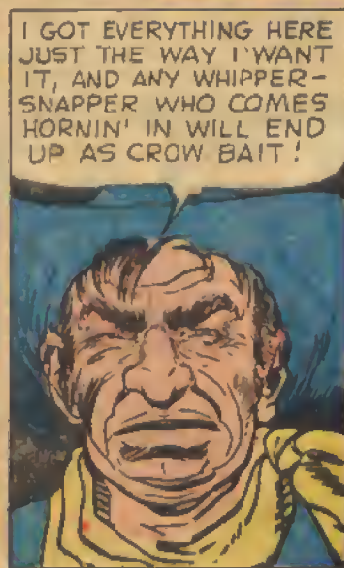
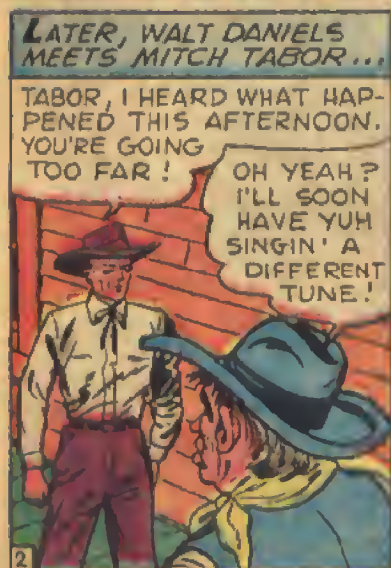
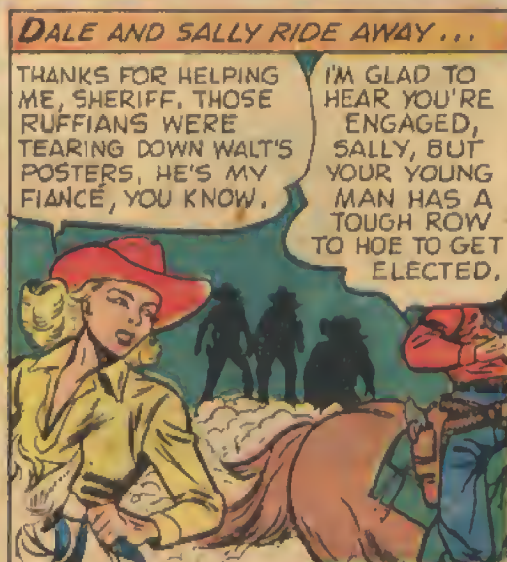
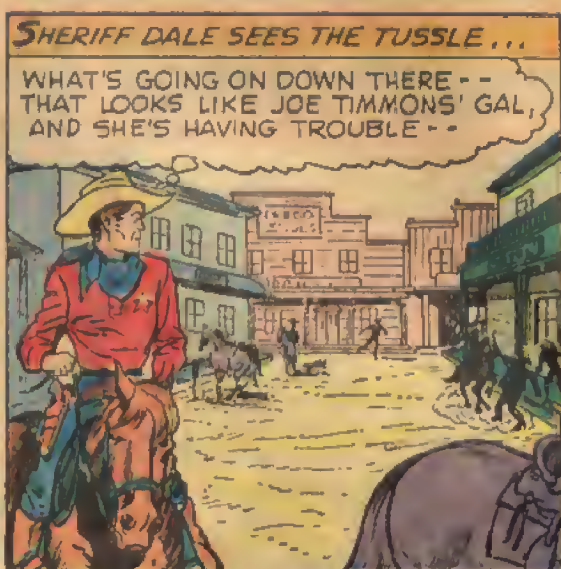
LET GO OF MY HORSE!

LISTEN, GAL, I DON'T CARE IF YORE PAW DOES OWN THE BIG CIRCLE T SPREAD, HERE IN THIS TOWN I'M BOSS. GET THAT STRAIGHT!

SALLY TIMMONS, DAUGHTER OF A NEIGHBORING RANCHER, HAPPENS TO RIDE BY, AND SEES THEM...

STOP THAT, MITCH TABOR! THIS IS GOING TO BE A FAIR ELECTION. YOU LEAVE WALT'S POSTERS ALONE!





AS WALT PASSES AN ALLEY, TINA MOORE RUSHES OUT AND ACCOSTS HIM...

OH WALT, BE CAREFUL! MITCH TABOR WILL KILL YOU - I HEARD HIM SAY SO!



I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF, TINA. BUT THANKS FOR THE WARNING. YOU ARE A GOOD PAL.

YES - ALWAYS JUST - (SOB!) A PAL - NOTHING ELSE --



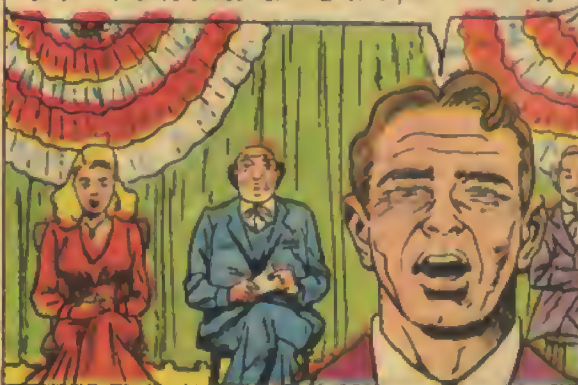
TINA, WEeping, RUSHES AWAY FROM WALT...

POOR KID - BEING THE BARTENDER'S DAUGHTER MAKES FOLKS LOOK DOWN ON HER. SHE'S A SWELL GIRL, BUT AFTER ALL, I'M ENGAGED TO SALLY. I DO HOPE TINA WILL FALL IN LOVE WITH SOMEBODY ELSE.



NEXT DAY, WALT MAKES AN ELECTION SPEECH...

FELLOW TOWNSMEN, I KNOW THAT BEING THE END OF THE CATTLE RUN, A LOT OF MONEY IS SPENT IN ROCKY BEND. BUT HOW IS IT SPENT? IN BOOZING AND GAMBLING! CROOKED GAMBLING, AT THAT!!



TABOR ELBOWS HIS WAY FORWARD...

LISTEN, YOUNG FELLER, THIS TOWN'S DOIN' ALL RIGHT. I AIN'T HEARD ANY COMPLAINTS YET -

OH, NO?



THAT'S BECAUSE YOU TERRORIZE ALL THE DECENT CITIZENS WITH YOUR GANG OF CROOKS AND GUNSELS, TO PROTECT YOUR MONOPOLY ON WHISKEY AND GAMBLING. THE MONEY COMES IN, ALL RIGHT, BUT IT GOES INTO YOUR OWN POCKETS.



GOADED TO ANGER, MITCH TABOR AND HIS HIRED KILLERS ADVANCE MENACINGLY...

YOU'LL EAT THEM WORDS!



SHERIFF DALE, BEHIND THE STAND, HAS HEARD THE WHOLE ALTERCATION...

SOUNDS LIKE IT'S TIME FOR ME TO TAKE A HAND...



LAY OFF, TABOR! NOBODY SHOTS AN UNARMED MAN AND GETS AWAY WITH IT. WHAT'S MORE, WALT DANIELS, HERE, HAS A RIGHT TO HIS SAY. THE PEOPLE WILL DECIDE WHO'S RIGHT WHEN THEY GO TO THE POLLS.



IN A TOWERING RAGE, TABOR AND HIS HENCHMEN LEAVE...

OH WALT-I'M AFRAID! THAT MAN WILL DO ANYTHING TO GET REVENGE ON YOU!

DON'T WORRY, SALLY, I'LL BE ALL RIGHT.

I SEE WHERE I'LL HAVE TO STAY IN ROCKY BEND TIL AFTER THE ELECTION IS OVER. ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN



THAT EVENING, WALT DANIELS GOES TO THE SILVER POKE SALOON TO TALK TO THE MEN AND SOLICIT VOTES...

IF MITCH TABOR THINKS HE CAN SCARE ME OFF, HE HAS ANOTHER THINK COMING -



TABOR, DRINKING AT THE BAR, TAUNTS WALT...

WELL, IF IT AIN'T THE LITTLE LAWYER AGAIN. HE'S SURE LOOKIN' FER A TICKET TUH BOOTHILL.



I TALK STRAIGHT, TABOR, AND I DON'T HAVE TO GO ARMED TO BACK IT UP.

EVERY MAN WHO'S A MAN IN THIS TOWN PACKS IRON.



MITCH IS DRUNK AGAIN.

YEAH, BUT HE'S AS QUICK ON THE DRAW AS WHEN HE'S SOBER.



MITCH IS RIGHT, IF THIS HERE LAWYER HAD ANY GUTS, HE'D MEET HIM WITH A GUN, FAIR AND SQUARE.

YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT.



GET A GUN AND MEET ME HERE TOMORROW NIGHT, OR EVERYBODY WILL KNOW YUH FER A WHITE-LIVERED, YELLOW-BELLIED DOG!



TO THE SURPRISE OF ALL PRESENT, WALT CALMLY ACCEPTS THE CHALLENGE...

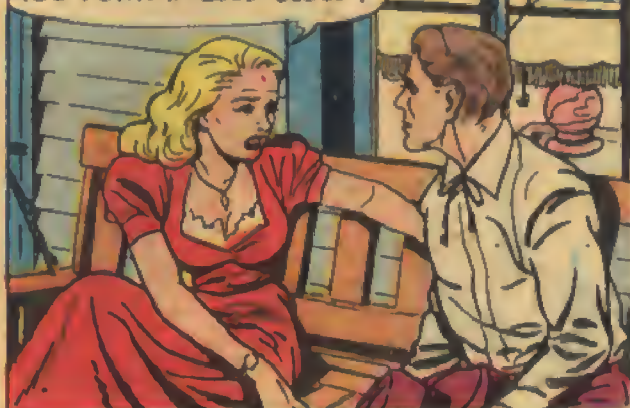
OKAY—I'LL BE HERE.



WHEN WALT TELLS SALLY, SHE IS FEARFUL...

OH WALT—YOU MUSTN'T! IT'S A TRAP. HE KNOWS YOU'RE NOT A GUNMAN. HE'LL SHOOT YOU DOWN IN COLD BLOOD!

I'VE GOT TO GO, SALLY.



YOU SEE, THE MEN I'M ASKING TO VOTE FOR ME HAVE THEIR OWN CODE OF HONOR. ANY MAN WHO CAN'T STAND HIS GROUND WITH A GUN HAS NO RESPECT IN THEIR EYES. THAT'S WHY I'VE GOT TO TAKE MY CHANCES.



IN DESPERATION, SALLY GOES TO BOB DALE...

YOU'VE GOT TO STOP IT, SHERIFF. WALT WILL BE MURDERED. HE CAN'T COMPETE WITH A GUNSLINGER LIKE TABOR.

I HATE TO SEE IT WORK OUT THIS WAY, SALLY, BUT I CAN'T INTERFERE IF TWO MEN, BOTH ARMED, DECIDE TO SHOOT IT OUT.



WELL BEFORE THE COMING DUEL, BOB DALE GOES TO THE SALOON TO SEE THAT WALT GETS A FAIR DEAL...

IF THAT YOUNG FELLOW DANIELS SHOWS UP, HE SURE HAS LOTS OF GUTS—



MITCH TABOR ARRIVES AND IS LOUDLY GREETED BY THE CROWD OF MEN...



HELLO, BOYS!

HI, MITCH.

'LO, MITCH. WE'RE HERE TO SEE THE FUN.

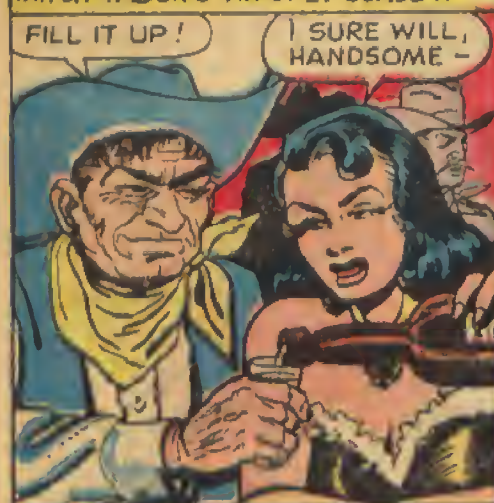
AS MITCH TAKES HIS PLACE AT THE BAR, TINA, THE BARTENDER'S PRETTY DAUGHTER, LOOKS AT THE RASCAL ADORINGLY...



OH, MITCH, YOU'RE SO BIG AND STRONG. YOU THRILL ME SO! LET ME POUR YOU A DRINK.

SURE, BABY.

TINA PRODUCES A BOTTLE AND FILLS MITCH TABOR'S WHISKEY GLASS...



FILL IT UP!

I SURE WILL, HANDSOME -

MITCH TOSSES IT OFF AND BOASTS...



I BET THAT SKUNK LAWYER WON'T SHOW UP. HE'S GOT A YELLOW STREAK A FOOT LONG UP HIS BACK!

HAVE ANOTHER DRINK, MITCH.

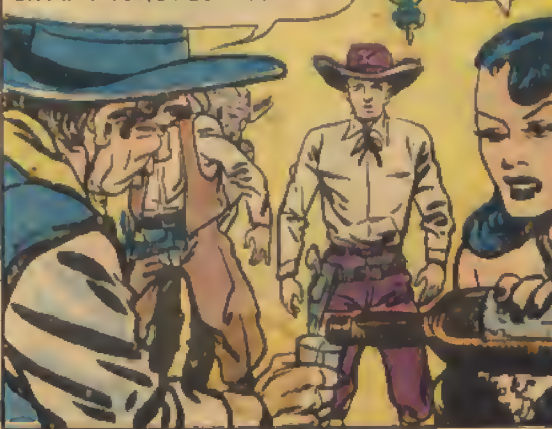
JUST THEN, THE CROWD FALLS BACK AS WALT DANIELS STRIDES IN, GUN ON THIGH...



HERE'S THE LAWYER!

NEVER THOUGHT HE'D BE HERE.

WELL, IF IT AIN'T LILY-LIVER! GIMME ANOTHER DRINK, BABY, THE DRUNKER I AM, THE FASTER I'LL PLUG THIS SMART-TONGUED COYOTE!



HERE IT IS MITCH. DRINK IT DOWN.

TOSSING OFF HIS DRINK, MITCH REACHES FOR HIS GUN ...

HERE GOES, YELLOW-BELLY!



BUT MITCH TABOR'S HAND SHOWS NONE OF ITS FAMOUS SWIFTNESS, AND WALT'S SLUG CATCHES HIM DEAD BETWEEN THE EYES ...

LOOK- HE GOT MITCH!

WHO'D-A THUNK IT?

ARRGH!



DALE STOPS TABOR'S TOUGHS STERNLY...

THAT'S ALL, MEN. IT WAS FAIR ALL ROUND. TABOR PROVOKED THIS FIGHT AND HE LOST. ANYONE WHO MOLESTS WALT DANIELS WILL ANSWER TO ME.



SALLY RUNS IN THE DOOR ...

WALT! YOU'RE SAFE, THANK HEAVEN!!

I DON'T KNOW YET HOW IT HAPPENED, SALLY.



AS THEY GO OUT, TINA SILENTLY WATCHES...

I HOPE THEY'LL BE AWFULLY HAPPY. HE'S ONE SWELL GUY - EVEN IF HE FELL IN LOVE WITH ANOTHER GIRL.



LATER THAT NIGHT, TINA EMPTIES THE WHISKEY BOTTLE BACK OF HER HOUSE ...

LUCKY I FOUND THAT LAUDENUM PAW USED WHEN HE HAD A TOOTHACHE. MITCH COULDN'T TASTE IT IN THE WHISKEY, AND IT PARALYZED HIS HAND JUST IN TIME TO SAVE WALT'S LIFE - AND WALT WILL NEVER KNOW!



K·BAR·KATE..

"KATE'S SEVEN DAY WONDER"

by R. HAYDEN

KATHERINE SLOCUM, BORN AND RAISED ON A RANCH, HAS COME EAST TO NEW YORK TO TAKE LESSONS IN DRAMATIC ART. ONE WEDNESDAY MORNING, IN HER APARTMENT, SHE IS PRACTICING BEFORE HER MIRROR, WHEN ...

SOMEBODY'S AT THE DOOR - I WONDER WHO IT CAN BE --

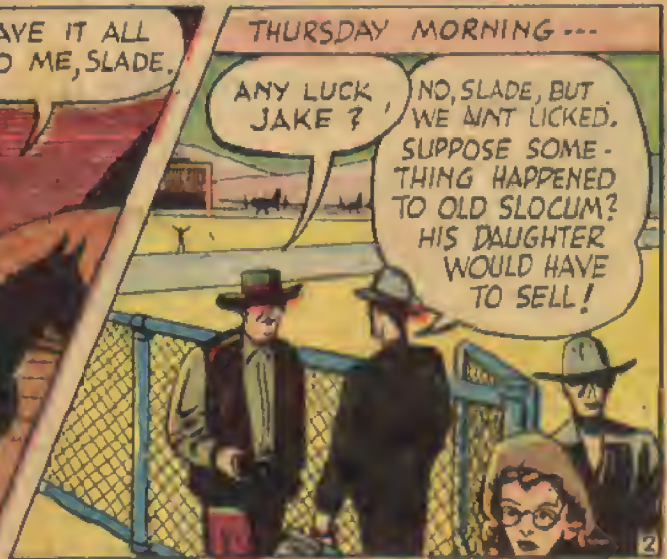
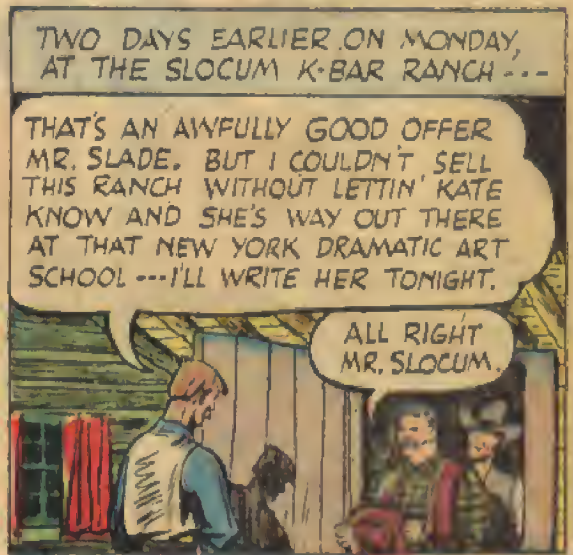
BUZZ-Z-
BUZZ-Z-Z-

WHO IS THAT MAN, MISS? HE TRIED TO BRIBE ME TO LET HIM DELIVER THIS LETTER. -- SAID HE WAS AN OLD FRIEND.

HEY TAXI!

I NEVER SAW HIM BEFORE!





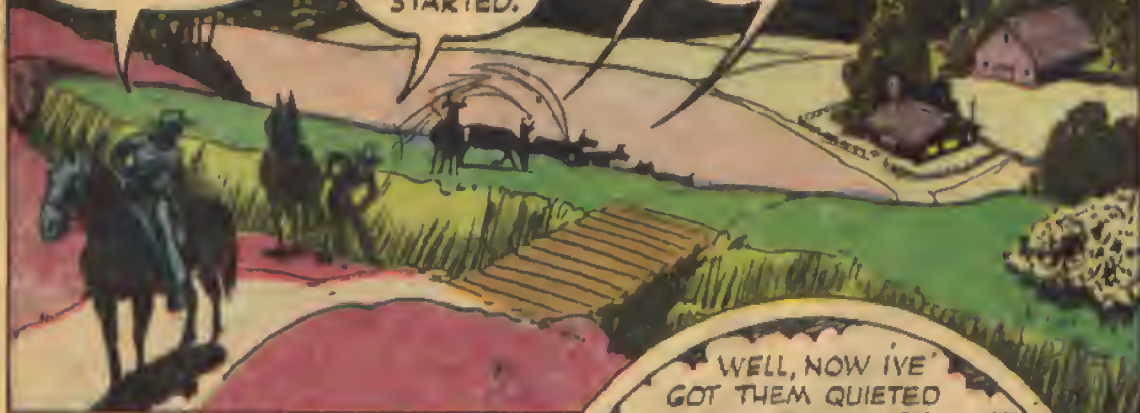
THAT NIGHT AT THE K-BAR

IS EVERYTHING
READY, JAKE?

YES, SLADE,
AND THIS'LL
GET THEM
STARTED.

BAW!

BAW-W-W!



THERE'S SOMETHING
AFTER THOSE CATTLE!



WELL, NOW I'VE
GOT THEM QUIETED
DOWN-- BUT THERE MUST
BE SOMETHING UP ON THE
RIDGE --- BETTER GO SEE --



BUT AS SLOCUM CROSSES THE BRIDGE
OVER THE NARROW DRAW---



CRACK!



FRIDAY MORNING DEPUTY DON HOWELL, KATE'S CHILDHOOD FRIEND, RIDING OVER TO SEE DAD SLOCUM, COMES UPON THE BROKEN BRIDGE...

SOMEBODY'S HURT DOWN THERE!

HELP!

THANK GOD YOU FELL ON YOUR HORSE, MR. SLOCUM! HE'S DEAD BUT YOU'RE ALIVE!

SUNDAY, IN RESPONSE TO DON'S TELEGRAM, KATE ARRIVES HOME...

WELL, KATE, THE DOC SAYS MY HIP WON'T LET ME RIDE FOR MONTHS--- GUESS I'LL HAVE TO TAKE SLADE'S OFFER AND SELL THE K-BAR.

NONSENSE, DAD, MY CAREER CAN WAIT--- I'LL RUN THE RANCH--- MAYBE DON WILL HELP ME SOME.

SURE WILL!

THAT'S GOOD NEWS, KIDS!

I LOST MY GUN WHEN I FELL DOWN IN THAT DRAW --- FEEL KINDA LOST WITHOUT THAT OLD PAL.

JIM AND I WILL GO LOOK FOR IT IN THE MORNING.

MONDAY MORNING ---

SOMETHING FUNNY ABOUT THIS --- THAT BRIDGE WAS ALWAYS SOLID AS A ROCK.

I FOUND IT --- COME ON DOWN-- I WANT TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING.



WHAT DID YOU WANT TO SHOW ME, DON?

HERE'S YOUR DAD'S GUN---AND SOMETHING ELSE --- SAWDUST!



YES, AND HERE'S WHERE IT CAME FROM --- THIS LOG HAS BEEN SAWED!

WHAT'S THIS? SOMETHING TIED UP IN A HANDKERCHIEF.

HMM--- -- A FINGER MISSING!-- WONDER WHAT THAT REMINDS ME OF---



ORE SAMPLES!--- AND A MUDDY HAND-PRINT--- LOOKS LIKE THE GUY HAS A FINGER MISSING.



MEANWHILE OVER AT SLADE'S RANCH.

HAVE YOU SEEN THOSE ORE SAMPLES AROUND, THAT I FOUND OVER ON THE K-BAC RANCH?

MY GOSH! MAYBE YOU LOST 'EM SOMEWHERE ON SLOCUM'S PROPERTY!

EARLY MONDAY MORNING...

WE'LL HAVE TO WORK FAST--
THEY MIGHT FIND THEM SAMPLES
ON THEIR RANCH AND GET SUSPICIOUS--
IF THEY LOCATE THAT VEIN THEY'LL NEVER
SELL--I'LL DOUBLE MY OFFER RIGHT NOW.



WHILE OVER AT THE K-BAR...

J.S.?--I DON'T KNOW ANYBODY
AROUND HERE WITH
THOSE INITIALS.

NEITHER
DO I.



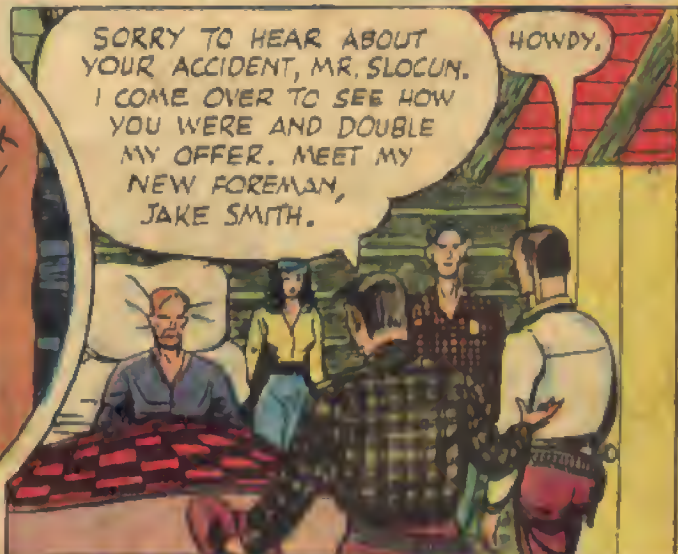
I WONDER WHY I KEEP
WONDERING ABOUT
THAT 3-FINGER
HAND-PRINT.

KNOCK
KNOCK



SORRY TO HEAR ABOUT
YOUR ACCIDENT, MR. SLOCUM.
I COME OVER TO SEE HOW
YOU WERE AND DOUBLE
MY OFFER. MEET MY
NEW FOREMAN,
JAKE SMITH.

HOWDY.



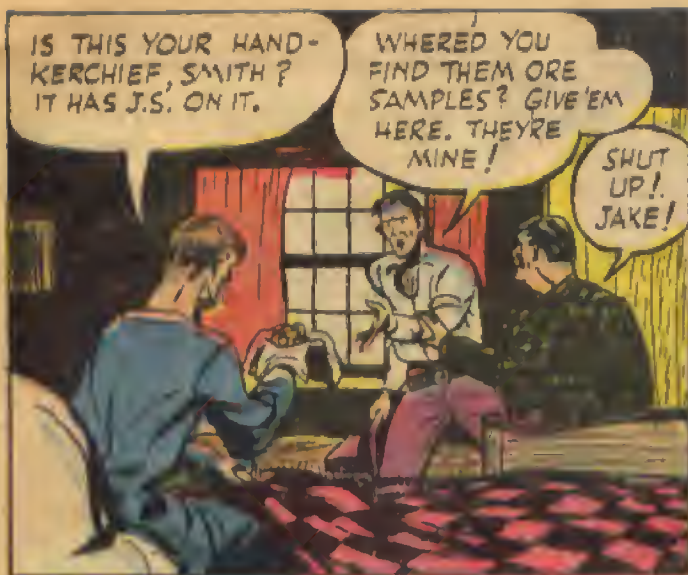
HAVEN'T I SEEN YOU
SOMEWHERE BEFORE,
MR. SMITH?

I GUESS
NOT, MA'AM



JAKE SMITH -
J.S.? -- HMMM--





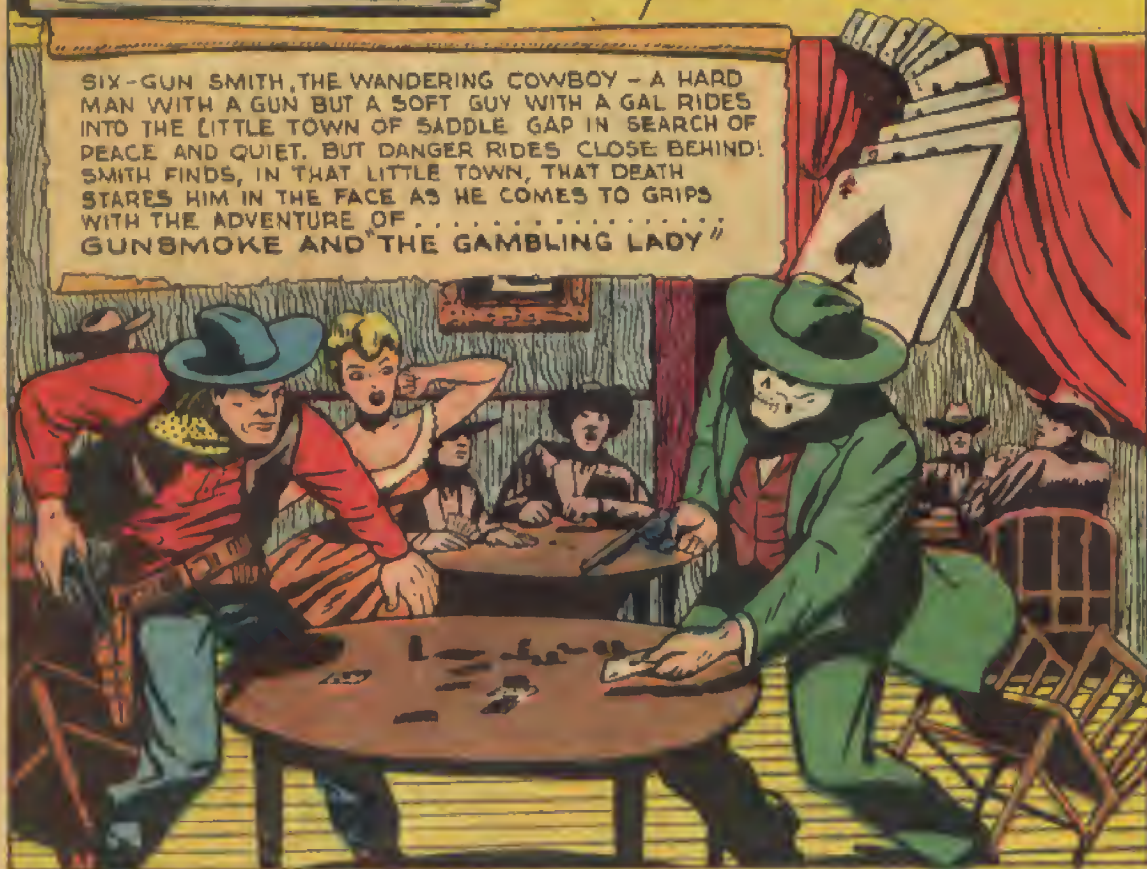


SIX-GUN SMITH

IN
"GUNSMOKE AND THE
"GAMBLING LADY"

by BERTHOLD TIEDEMANN

SIX-GUN SMITH, THE WANDERING COWBOY - A HARD MAN WITH A GUN BUT A SOFT GUY WITH A GAL RIDES INTO THE LITTLE TOWN OF SADDLE GAP IN SEARCH OF PEACE AND QUIET. BUT DANGER RIDES CLOSE BEHIND! SMITH FINDS, IN THAT LITTLE TOWN, THAT DEATH STARES HIM IN THE FACE AS HE COMES TO GRIPS WITH THE ADVENTURE OF "GUNSMOKE AND THE GAMBLING LADY"



SADDLE GAP LOOKS KINDA QUIET STARFACE. BUT THAT'S WHAT WE WANT, I RECKON. FER YOU SOME OATS AND A PLACE TO REST... FER ME A LITTLE WORK, A LITTLE WHISKEY- AND MAYBE A LITTLE ADVENTURE.



HERE'S A CHANCE TO WET DOWN SOME O' THIS PRAIRIE DUST IN MUH GULLET! GUESS I'LL LEAVE YUH FER A WHILE, STARFACE!



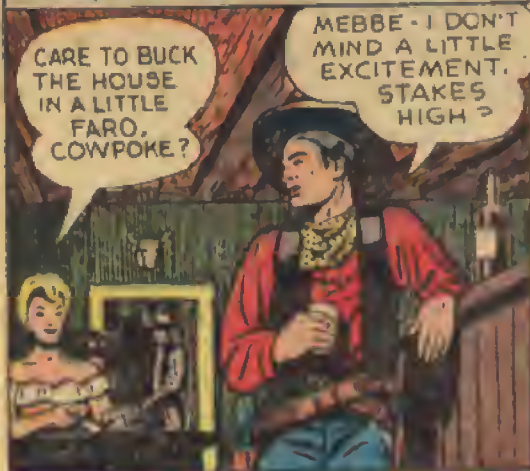
AMBLING INTO THE SADDLEBACK SALOON, THE DRIFTING COWBOY TOSSES OFF A DRINK, AND LISTENS TO AN INVITATION...

CARE TO BUCK THE HOUSE IN A LITTLE FARO, COWPOKE?

MEBBE - I DON'T MIND A LITTLE EXCITEMENT. STAKES HIGH?

HIGH AS YOU MAKE THEM.

NEVER PLAYED WITH A LADY BANKER BEFORE - WE'LL START LOW.

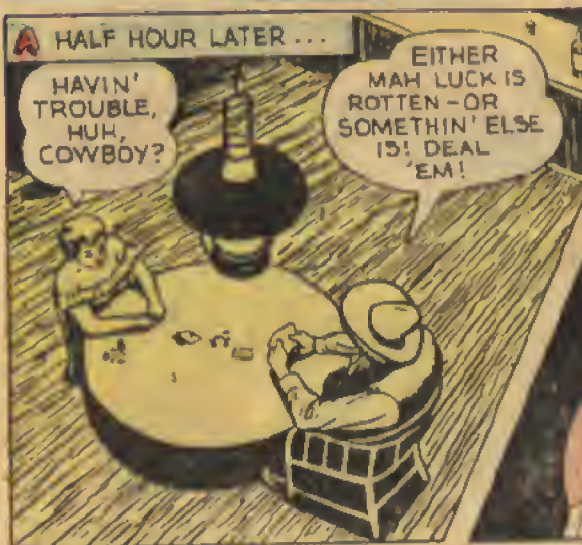


A HALF HOUR LATER...

HAVIN' TROUBLE, HUH, COWBOY?

EITHER MAH LUCK IS ROTTEN - OR SOMETHIN' ELSE IS! DEAL 'EM!

THE GIRL DEALS THE CARDS...



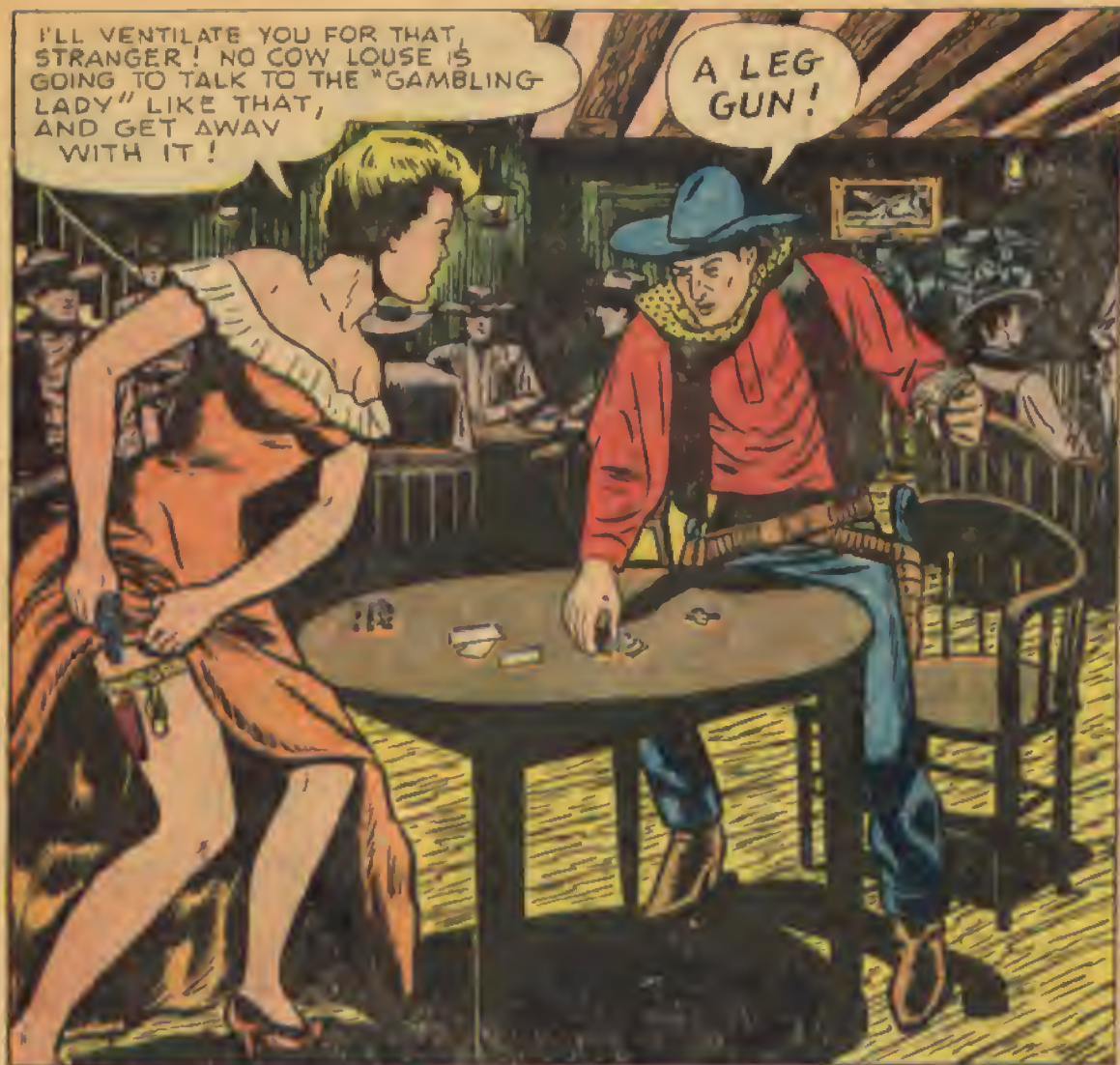
AS SMITH WATCHES CLOSELY...

... AND SUDDENLY EXPLODES IN RAGE! HE YELLS...

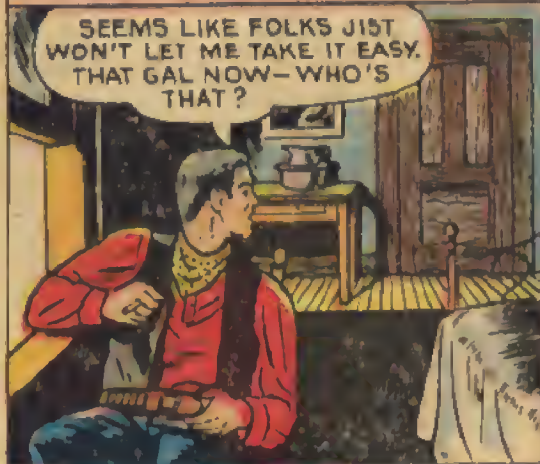
YOU HELLCAT! YUH PALMED THAT ACE! GIMME THEM GREENBACKS!

WHY YOU...





RETURNING TO HIS HOTEL, SMITH FINDS CONDITIONS MORE PEACEFUL AS HE SITS ALONE IN HIS ROOM...



THROWING THE DOOR OPEN, SMITH FINDS AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR, —SO...

THE FARO DEALER! NOW LISTEN HERE...

I'M SORRY FOR THAT RUCKUS STRANGER — I'D LIKE TO MEET YOU FORMALLY. MY NAME'S PEG GARNETT.



THEY CALL ME SMITH.

LOOK AT THESE PAPERS — THEY'LL PROVE THAT I'M A SPECIAL U.S. AGENT! I'M IN SADDLE GAP BECAUSE MY BOSS FIGURES THE BLUE GANG IS WORKIN' OUT OF HERE — STICKING UP STAGECOACHES!



THAT'S PROOF, SURE ENOUGH. FER A SPECIAL AGENT YUH DEAL A MEAN GAME O' FARO — AND PULL A MEAN GUN!

NEVER MIND THAT! SMITH — I WANT YOU TO HELP ME! I NEED SOME-BODY — I'VE GOT A LEAD ON THE GANG LEADER — BUT I CAN'T HANDLE IT BY MYSELF!



WHY PICK ME?

HUNCH! YOU MOVE QUICK AND YOU ACT LIKE A SQUARE SHOOTER. WILL YOU HELP ME?



SMITH AGREES, AND THE NEXT EVENING FINDS HIM LOUNGING AT THE SALOON'S BAR, KEEPING AN EYE ON PEG AS SHE PLAYS CARDS...

YUH AIN'T BEEN IN TOWN LONG, PEG — AND I SUSPECT YUH ROB ME BLIND AT FARO — BUT I GOT A POWERFUL AFFECTION FER YUH!

THAT'S NICE TALK FROM A BIG MAN LIKE YOU, MR. COLBY.



SUDDENLY THREE LOUD, RUGGED HOMBRES STRIDE INTO THE SALOON. ONE JOSTLES SMITH OUT OF HIS WAY...

MAKE ROOM HERE, DRIFTER. I'LL HAVE WHISKEY!

WHY, YOU MANGY COYOTE!

A DEATHLY SILENCE BLANKETS THE LARGE ROOM. ALL EYES TURN TO SMITH AND THE NEWCOMER...

WHY, STRANGER, YUH JIST MADE YORE LAST MISTAKE. YUH CALLED ME A NAME. GO FER YORE IRON!

I'M READY WHENEVER YUH STOP PALAVERIN', FRIEND.



THOSE THREE LIZARDS
WORKED FOR ME - UNTIL JUST
NOW. MAYBE YOU TWO WOULD
LIKE TO TAKE THEIR
PLACES...

DOIN'
WHAT?

I'LL TELL YUH - IN
PRIVATE. PEG - HOW
ABOUT STEPPIN' INTO
THE BACK ROOM HERE
WITH ME - WHILE YORE
FRIEND WAITS?

NOT A
CHANCE
MISTER!
WE'LL STICK
TOGETHER...



BUT PEG SWIFTLY CUTS SMITH SHORT
WITH A REASSURING WINK! ...

IT'S ALL RIGHT, SMITTY -
MR. COLBY AND I ARE OLD
FRIENDS. SEE YOU IN A
LITTLE WHILE!

IT'S
YORE
DEAL. I'LL
WAIT
HERE.



PEG AND COLBY GO INTO THE BACK
ROOM, AND SMITH, READY FOR
ANYTHING, WAITS UNEASILY OUTSIDE ...

HOPE I KIN TRUST THAT GAL ... COLBY
IS A PLUMB SHIFTY LOOKIN' MAVERICK ...
SALOON'S EMPTY ... MY THREE PLAYMATES
DONE PULLED UP STAKES AND
VAMMOOSED, I RECKON ... AND
I CAME TO SADDLE GAP
TO REST UP!



ON THE BACK ROOM OF THE SALOON...

NO DRINK,
THANKS. NOW,
MR. COLBY, WHAT'S
YOUR PROPOSITION?

AW, CALL ME MARTIN.
PEG, WE LIKE EACH
OTHER. MY
PROPOSITION?
FRANKLY, PEG, IT'S
NOT STRICTLY ON THE
LEVEL, BUT I KNOW A
GAMBLIN' GAL LIKE YOU
DON'T MIND THAT. WHAT
ABOUT YORE FRIEND?



SMITH? HE'S
QUICK WITH A GUN
BUT SLOW WITH
HIS HEAD. I DO
THE THINKIN'!
WHAT'S IT
ABOUT?

IT'S BIG, PEG!
HEARD OF THE
BLUE GANG?
WELL I'M THE
FOREMAN! I CAN
USE NERVE AND
BRAINS LIKE YOURS
AND A GUN LIKE
SMITH'S!





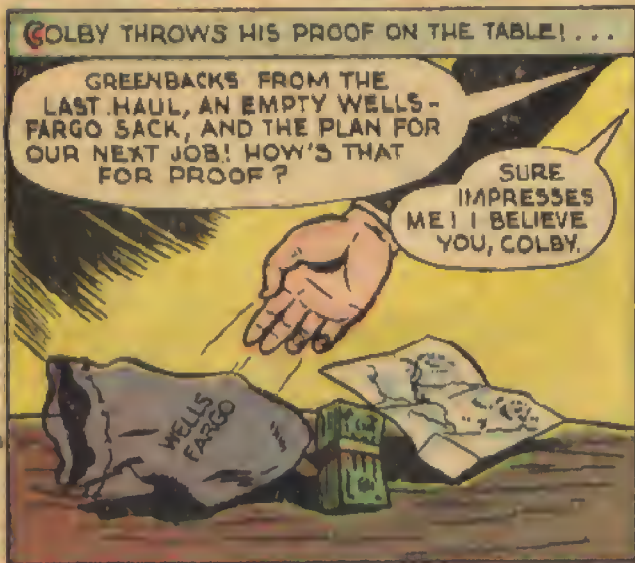
THE BLUE GANG, HUH? SURE, THERE'S BIG MONEY IN STICKIN' UP STAGES - I'D LIKE TO GET MY HANDS ON SOME - BUT HOW DO I KNOW YOU'RE TELLIN' THE TRUTH?

WOULD I TELL YOU I WAS A BANDIT IF IT WASN'T TRUE?



I DON'T KNOW, BUT YOU GET KINDA CAUTIOUS IN MY BUSINESS, COLBY, SO - NO PROOF, NO PLUNDERIN'! -

ALL RIGHT! YOU'RE A SKITTISH FILLY, PEG! HOW'S THIS FOR PROOF?



COLBY THROWS HIS PROOF ON THE TABLE! ...

GREENBACKS FROM THE LAST HAUL, AN EMPTY WELLS-FARGO SACK, AND THE PLAN FOR OUR NEXT JOB! HOW'S THAT FOR PROOF?

SURE IMPRESSES ME! I BELIEVE YOU, COLBY.



THAT MEANS YOU'LL THROW IN WITH ME, HUH, PEG? HOW ABOUT A LITTLE KISS ON IT?

WHY NOT - MARTIN?



INTENT ON THE PRIZE BEFORE HIM, COLBY DOESN'T SEE PEG REACH INTO HIS POCKET ...

THAT'S THE GAL! WE'RE GONNA TEAM UP GOOD, PEG - YOU AND ME!



SNATCHING THE PROOF OF COLBY'S GUILT FROM HIS POCKET, PEG LEAPS TO THE DOOR AND THROWS IT OPEN AS SMITH CHARGES IN ...

SMITH! THIS IS THE CRITTER WE WANT! I'VE GOT THE PROOF!

WHY YUH DOUBLE-CROSSIN' - C'MERE!

BUT COLBY GRABS PEG AS SHE OPENS THE DOOR...

GET HIM, SMITH - OH!

YOUR TRICK NEARLY WORKED - BUT NOT QUITE! DON'T SHOOT, SMITH - OR YOU'LL PLUG YOUR GIRL FRIEND!

DRIVEN TO COVER, SMITH FIGURES RAPIDLY...

PEG AND ME ARE GONERS IF I DON'T NAIL THIS RATTLER... HE'S IN FRONT OF THAT SAFE! NOW IF I KIN...

THAT TABLE WON'T DO YOU NO GOOD, SMITH!



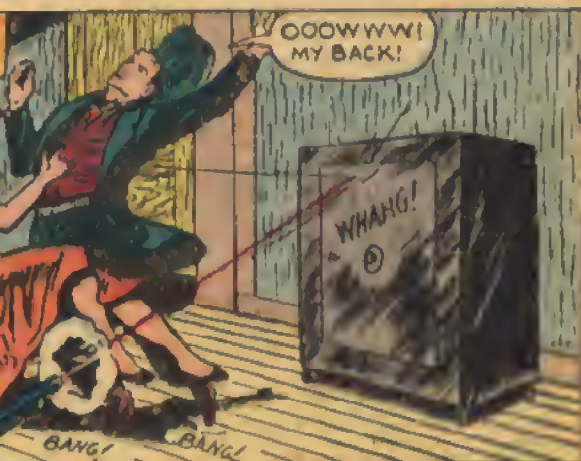
SMITH ANGLES THREE RAPID SHOTS OFF THE SAFE! ONE FINDS THE MARK!...

I DONE THIS PLAYIN' POOL, BUT NEVER WITH A SIX SHOOTER!

YOU GOT HIM, SMITH!

OOOWWW! MY BACK!

WHANG!



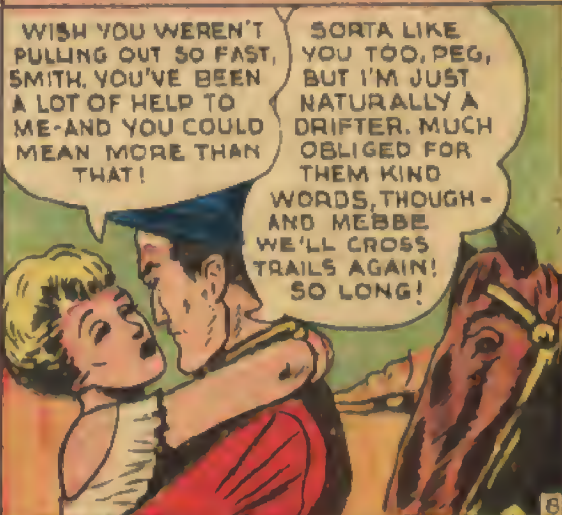
THE NEXT MORNING, SIX-GUN SMITH PREPARES TO DRIFT ON TO A BRAND NEW RANGE AND NEW ADVENTURES...

NICE SHOOTIN', SMITH! AND THIS STUFF WILL PROVE COLBY WAS THE BRAINS OF THAT OUTLAW BUNCH!

HE'S DEADER'N A PETRIFIED DOGWOOD.

WISH YOU WEREN'T PULLING OUT SO FAST, SMITH. YOU'VE BEEN A LOT OF HELP TO ME - AND YOU COULD MEAN MORE THAN THAT!

SORTA LIKE YOU TOO, PEG, BUT I'M JUST NATURALLY A DRIFTER. MUCH OBLIGED FOR THEM KIND WORDS, THOUGH - AND MEBBE WE'LL CROSS TRAILS AGAIN! SO LONG!



LOOK FOR SIX-GUN SMITH - NEXT ISSUE...

GREED FOR GOLD

By RALPH SEDGWICK DOUGLAS

CLANCY YATES, half-pint editor of the *Mesquite Sentinel*, was doing a little dry shooting when he heard the front door slam open. The diminutive newspaperman put the .45 back on a shelf near the make-up stone. He always kept it there, for libel suits were more often settled at the point of a gun than in court in this frontier town.

"Yates!" a voice roared with anger and Kurt Borelder, owner of the Western Freight Service and the Desert Dream gold mine, came stomping into the composing room. He was followed by two large men whom Clancy recognized as Harcourt, the mine superintendent and Twisty Magouilles, manager of the wagon freight. The beely six-foot mine owner threw down the latest issue of the *Sentinel* in front of the little editor.

"What do you mean by this you handy-legged, slanderin', lyin' wart?"

Clancy glanced at the headlines:

IS THE DESERT DREAM A BLIND?

When Will the Law Investigate the High-Grading Activities of a Low-Grade Thief?

Borelder towered over Clancy, trembling with rage. "You're goin' to get out another paper today. You're goin' to retract every word of this lyin' story. You're goin' to tell everybody you saw with yore own snoopin' eyes the strike we made in the Desert Dream!"

"But I aint seen it!" Clancy flared up. "An' I don't believe you've got any gold in that garbage hole."

"Why waste time on this coyote?" broke in Twisty, his eyes glittering. "Let me work on him, boss."

"Not now!" snapped Borelder. "This town is goin' to read what a mistake this little coyote editor made. He's goin' to get on his belly an' eat dirt!"

"Show me the color of your gold," Clancy said calmly. "Show me that your gold comes out of the Desert Dream and not from some high-grading skulduggery connected with the Western Freight Service for the mines in the Black Rock Hills."

Borelder's face turned purple. "I'll show you some color! I'll show you some picture rock that'll make yore eyes pop out! You're goin' with us—right now!"

THEY prodded Clancy outside where a rig was waiting. The editor's eyes swept up the empty street. The day was hot and everybody was indoors.

Borelder laughed unpleasantly. "Don't worry, you'll have more company, though I don't know how friendly they'll be. The sheriff and the mayor will be at the mine. An' that ain't all. Miss Susan White is also goin' to be at the Desert Dream for the showdown. What do you think of that?"

Clancy stared at the big man.

"Surprised, eh?" Borelder taunted. "Well, maybe

Susan White will wish you hadn't stuck yore ink-covered snout into other people's business. The Western Freight Service could refuse to haul her ore to the mill. Then where would the Saucy Susan mine be?"

Clancy climbed into the back seat of the rig, silently thinking Borelder was plenty shrewd, and had something up his sleeve. The editor thought of pretty, dark-haired Susan White, trying, alone, to operate the mine her father had named after her. It had been a struggle to keep the Saucy Susan open after his death, but she had faith in his prediction that a rich strike of gold telluride ore would be made in the sunken volcanic crater. And that faith had been rewarded when a crew on the fourth level had broken into a chamber or vug, fairly lined with telluride gold. The samples had assayed plenty high, but somehow, the mill receipts had failed to measure up to expectations. That was when Susan had come to Clancy to tell him her troubles.

WHEN they reached the mine, they found the others waiting. A little later, down on the third level of the Desert Dream, Clancy Yates stood staring at a pile of broken ore. Then he glanced at the walls showing sylvanite and calaverite crystals, then back at the ore ready to be taken to the shaft.

"Take all the specimens you want," Borelder said smugly, "and have them assayed. They run plenty high."

"What do you say, Clancy?" asked grey-haired Mayor Crossen reproachfully. "Don't you think you were a bit hasty?"

"Yeah," put in Sheriff Sanders of Basin County. "Blowin' yore top off an' takin' a crack at the Law—makin' fools out of all of us."

"Kinda thought I had it all figured out," mumbled Clancy. "There's been some high-gradin' up at the Saucy Susan—and it's mighty queer how the owner of an ore-hauling concern owns a mine too, and makes a strike at the same time that the Saucy Susan does."

Clancy stooped over and picked up a piece of ore. He looked at the purple stain caused by fluorine and the green tinge of the tellurium. The ore was rich with gold all right.

Borelder turned to Susan White.

"Miss White, you made a pretty sad mistake when you went to Clancy Yates with your story about high-gradin'. You keep a record of your tonnage and it tallies with what is received at the mill. You're just too optimistic over sample assays and expectin' too much. I'd first thought it would be best to discontinue our hauling service to your mine entirely, but if this cocky editor will print a full and public apology, I might reconsider my decision."

Susan White turned her frosty blue eyes on the little printer.

"I rather think Mr. Yates will correct his first impulsive impressions in tomorrow's paper."

"The *Sentinel* don't come out tomorrow," said Clancy defiantly. "Twice a week—Tuesdays and Fridays."

"You'll print an extra tomorrow morning!" bel-lowed Borelder.

"You certainly will," put in Mayor Crossen. "The people of Mesquite are entitled to know the truth."

Borelder pointed to the specimen of ore Clancy held in his ink-stained fingers. "Have that sample assayed, Yates, and print the result in your dirty sheet!"

Clancy turned the rock over in his hand.

"I certainly will," he muttered. "I'm on my way."

THERE was a gleam in Clancy's eyes when he entered the assay office run by his friend, Jim Barkley. The assayer looked up from his furnace as the editor came into the dingy room.

"Got it, eh?" he grunted.

"Yep!" answered Clancy. "A good-sized hunk here. Just what we've been wanting."

Barkley took the heavy, greenish piece of rock and examined it.

"Looks rich," he said, turning it over. "I'll run it down, after a bit. Going to assay plenty high, I suspect."

"That's not what I want to know!" shouted Clancy. "Is it what we think it is, or ain't it?"

Barkley got out his watch, looked at it carefully. "I can drop by your office on my way home," he suggested finally, "and I'll give you a full and complete report, or—" he chuckled drily, "if you care to wait, I've got some samples from the Saucy Susan and we'll run 'em all down at the same time."

"Let's get busy, Jim," grunted Clancy impatiently.

THE next morning, five men stalked into the one-story home of the *Mesquite Sentinel*. They ranged themselves expectantly along the rickety railing that set off the editorial office. On the other side of the railing sat the little editor, his back to his cluttered desk and his booted feet over the rail. On one side of him sat Jim Barkley, calmly puffing on a cigar, while on the other side was pretty Susan White, owner of the Saucy Susan.

"Well!" demanded Borelder, the first of the five men. "Where is it?"

"Where's what?" asked Clancy, innocently.

"The paper!" roared Borelder. "I'm going to read every word of your apology before you put it out on the street."

"Oh, yes, the *Sentinel*. Well, you'll have to wait a spell. Paper don't come out till Friday."

"Why, you—" Purple with rage, the big man started on a string of profanity, then caught himself and stared at Susan White. "What are you doin' back there?" he barked. "Connivin' with that wizened wurt? I'll not tolerate it—"

The sheriff spoke up. "I don't like this, Clancy," he said sharply. "I thought that you understood that we gave you until noon today to get out a paper."

"We should've hustled up the place, like I wanted to!" growled Twisty.

Mayor Crossen silenced the manager of the freight line with one stern look, then turned to the little publisher. "All right, Clancy, what's up now?" He had known the fiery printer for too many years not to gauge this mood.

"Gentlemen, Miss White is nobody's fool!" The editor chuckled a bit. "She's a pretty good actress too. Pretended like she was awful disgusted with me and convinced I'd made a sad mistake. Well, we knew high-gradin' was goin' on. We satisfied ourselves that every sack that left the Saucy Susan was filled with high-grade ore. But it never all got to the mill—"

"We can prove it did!" shouted Twisty. "It was weighed when it left the mine and weighed when it reached the mill. Look at your receipts—they tally, don't they?"

"Yep, so they do. But you and Borelder worked a neat little scheme. You substituted as much ore as you dared, every time a wagon came along—"

"He's lyin'!" yelled Borelder. "Why should I want to high-grade? You saw what the Desert Dream is producin'. I'm shippin' ore from my own mine that assays \$5,000 to the ton!"

"Tell 'em, Jim," drawled Clancy.

The assayer looked contemptuously at Borelder and Twisty.

"I've been around here nearly thirty years. I've assayed gold from every mine in this country, and I've learned a few things about rock structure, too. The Saucy Susan, b'ing in the crater of an extinct volcano, produces gold tellurides of a distinctive character. I can tell where they came from as easy as I can tell two people apart."

"Something you overlooked, wasn't it," Clancy spat at the whitening Borelder, "when you frescoed the walls of the Desert Dream with a few tons of ore from the Saucy Susan? And you scattered enough broken ore to make it look like you'd opened a real vein."

"You dirty—!" Borelder's hand dipped speedily inside his coat.

With one shove of his feet against the rickety railing, Clancy sent the structure topping against Borelder. It threw the big man off balance, and before he could get his gun out, Clancy had scooped up his own .45 from under the clutter of loose papers and had it leveled at the mine owner.

"Put 'em up, Borelder, while the law shackles you," ordered the little editor.

While Sheriff Sanders disarmed Borelder and Twisty, Mayor Crossen spoke up, a bit sheepishly. "Clancy, I should've known better. I guess we all sort of walked into your trap, didn't we?"

Susan White answered for Clancy, her eyes warm and lovely.

"When I first told Clancy of my suspicions, we both realized that he needed some real evidence. Clancy was determined to get into the Desert Dream and bring out some samples—and Mr. Borelder was very obliging to us, though he didn't mean to be. By now, you all know what we found out."

"The *Sentinel*," observed Clancy drily, "always investigates the facts."

WILMA WEST-

"PERIL IN OWLHOOT VALLEY!"

by KEATS PETREE

NOT FAR FROM WILMA'S W-W RANCH, LIES OWLHOOT VALLEY... WHICH HAS BEEN MADE A STRONGHOLD BY A RUTHLESS GANG OF BANDITS WHO PREY UPON THE TERRITORY AND DEFEY THE LAW TO OUST THEM! ONE DAY THE SHERIFF CALLS UPON WILMA WEST...

SOONER SAM, AN OLD RANNEY, LISTENS IN...

MISS WILMA, I'M ROUNDIN' UP A POSSE TO RUN OUT THEM VARMINTS FROM THE VALLEY! IF YOU GOT ANY MEN...

I'LL GO MYSELF, SHERIFF!



NO...IT'S NO JOB FOR A GAL!

I OWN THIS SPREAD, AND IT'S MY DUTY TO HELP PROTECT IT!

NO USE IN ARGUIN', SHERIFF. MISS WILMA'S GOT A MIND OF HER OWN AN' SHE MAKES IT UP FAST. I'LL COME TOO AN' BRING CHUCK DALY, ONE OF THE HANDS WHO WORK HERE.



EARLY THE NEXT MORNING, THE POSSE HITS THE TRAIL...



THE RANCHERS ARE FIGHTIN' MAD. THEY CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE ANY MORE CATTLE TO THEM RUSTLERS.

AT NIGHTFALL, THEY CALL A HALT...

WE'LL CAMP HERE FOR THE NIGHT, WE'RE CLOSE TO THE VALLEY, SO BE QUIET, AND NO FIRES!



BUT UNKNOWN TO THEM, WATCHFUL EYES FOLLOW THEIR EVERY MOVE.

WE BETTER GIT BACK AN' TELL BLACKIE ABOUT THIS —

LATER, GROUPS OF SHADY FIGURES CONVERGE UPON THE CAMP...



THE OWL HOOTS NOW DOWN THE GUARDS AND BULLETS RIP INTO THE SLEEPING POSSE...



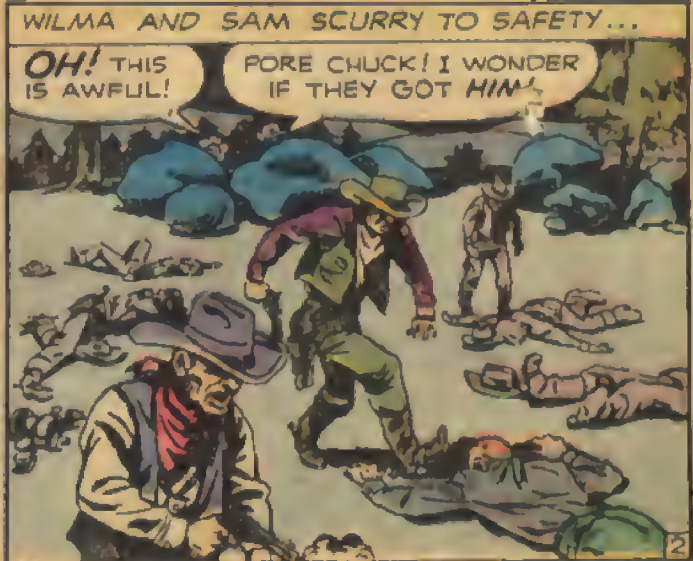
THEY SURPRISED US!

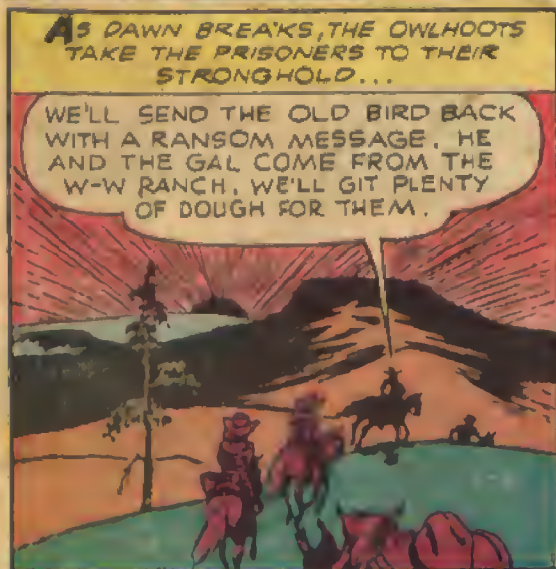
WE'RE GETTING THE WORST OF IT!

WILMA AND SAM SCURRY TO SAFETY...

OH! THIS IS AWFUL!

FORE CHUCK! I WONDER IF THEY GOT HIM!





AS BLACKIE LIFTS WILMA, HER HAND SLIDES TO HIS GUV...



SO THAT'S THE TRICK, EH? I'LL FIX YOU!



WILMA IS DRAGGED OUTSIDE AS NIGHT FALLS...

YOU NEED A LESSON, YOU HELLCAT!

OWW!



BLACKIE TIES HER TO A TREE...

WAIT TILL I GET MY BULLWHIP, AND WE'LL HAVE SOME FUN!



MEANWHILE, OLD SAM SUCCEEDS IN MAKING A ROPE FROM A THIN BLANKET...



... AND FASHIONS A SNARE OUTSIDE HIS WINDOW...

THIS IS AN OLD TRICK, BUT MAYBE THAT DUMB OWLHOOT WILL FALL FOR IT. HERE'S HOPING FOR THE BEST



THE UNWARY GUARD STEPS INTO THE NOOSE, IS JERKED OFF HIS FEET AND KNOCKED OUT...



I'LL JUST TAKE HIS KEYS...



SAM MAKES HIS ESCAPE...



HE DISCOVERS WILMA'S FLIGHT...



GOSH, SAM, I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU!



WHO'S THAT?



IT'S CHUCK!!

YES... I WASN'T HIT. I FOLLOWED YOU HERE!

LET'S GIT GOIN'!





SOME DISTANCE FURTHER ON...

THIS IS WHERE I KNOCKED OUT THEIR SENTRY, AND THAR'S HIS HORSE AN' MINE! WE'LL HAVE TO USE THEM, SOMEHOW, TO GIT OUT OF HERE, THAR'S NO TIME TO LOSE, SO LEAVE US GIT GOIN' OUTTA HERE JUST AS FAST AS WE CAN!



DOUBLING UP, THEY TAKE THEIR PRISONER AND HIGH-TAIL IT TO SAFETY...

GIDDAP!



LATER THAT DAY, THEY REACH TOWN...

IT'S BLACKIE DOLAN!

THEY GOT HIM!



BLACKIE WAS THE BRAINS OF THE GANG. WE'LL GIT THE REST OF 'EM NOW!

WE'LL AVENGE THE SHERIFF AND HIS BOYS, ALL RIGHT!



I DON'T KNOW WHAT WE'D HAVE DONE WITHOUT YOU, CHUCK!

SAY, MISS WILMA THAT KISS IS BETTER THAN A MONTH'S SALARY!



WELL, DEAR READERS, WE HOPE THAT YOU HAVE ENJOYED WESTERN CRIME BUSTERS. WRITE US AND LET US KNOW WHICH FEATURE YOU LIKED BEST...

